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THE HOUSE

ETCHED METAL FACINGS FOR MANTELS.



MANTEL may be considered the decorative framework enshrining the fireplace, and the fireplace of a sitting-room, being the attractive centre of the family circle, the mantel may fittingly be made the constructive feature of the room, and it should be as beautiful and suggestive as skill and good taste can make it. Much thought has been expended on the appropriate adornment of the modern mantel, but there is one feature susceptible of a more attractive finish than is usually given it—namely, the “facing,” that is, the framing of tiles—four, six or eight inches in width, according to the size of the mantel—immediately surrounding the fireplace. The Low, Trent and some other American glazed tiles are very beautiful, outrivalling the justly-famed Minton tiles, and make, when the colors are judiciously chosen, a high order of decoration. A still more original, suggestive and beautiful finish to the open fireplace may be obtained by using German silver, copper or brass, on which appropriate designs are etched, or both etched and hammered.

The illustrations given here-with show portions of a facing I have made for my home, of German silver (gauge 20 in thickness). The attractiveness of these examples is due to the chaste brilliance of the relief portions of the metal, and the varied effect of the etched and hammered designs. The etching is done first; afterward the hammering of the repoussé work. Etching of designs of this character is best done by carefully painting the design on the metal, with asphaltum varnish, to which a little raw linseed-oil is added. If any difficulty is experienced in working the varnish, dilute with a little turpentine. Use a camel's-hair brush, and lay on a somewhat dense body of varnish, going over, if necessary, a second time. When the surface to be etched—the background—is greater than the surface of the design, it is better to paint the design rather than cover the entire surface of the plate with etching wax and be at the trouble to clean the background. In putting on a design, consisting of, say, bands and lettering, where accuracy of outline is essential, first paint the edge of the line farthest from the hand, then turn the plate and complete the centre and the remaining opposite edge. Of course several lines may be painted before turning the plate. The interlaced bands of the design may be painted solid—that is, without the line of separation, to show the “over and under” effect. When the varnish is nearly dry, draw a dull tracing point across the bands, where necessary, to indicate the interlacing. A clearer line will thus be secured than would be possible by attempting to leave the line unpainted. The rosettes, in like manner, should

be painted solid, and the outlining of the petals and centre done when the plate is nearly ready for the acid bath.

The sides of the facing are six inches wide, the top eight, to allow for the spring of the flat arch over the fireplace. The design should not exceed four inches in width, thus allowing a margin of one inch on each side; three eighths of the *outer* edge will serve for fastening to a frame of the same wood as that of the mantel, and half an inch of the *inner* edge will turn in over the

A box-bath in which to etch these pieces of metal should be thirty-six inches long, eight and one half inches wide and six inches deep in the clear. It may be made of one-inch pine or poplar, and if jointed as follows, will be perfectly water-tight. The sides should project two inches beyond the ends, which should be inserted in grooves one quarter of an inch deep. The corners should be put together with a strip of paper or muslin, coated on both sides with white lead, and then firmly nailed in position. The following plan will secure a perfectly jointed bottom: On the lower edge of the sides and ends

depress a line of the wood one quarter of an inch wide by means of a steel punch one quarter of an inch square, making a groove one eighth of an inch deep. When this is done, plane off the raised edges to the level of the depressed portion. When the bottom is screwed on, half fill with water, and should there be a leakage, which will be likely, even with the most careful work, it will prove its own cure by swelling the depressed band till the joint is perfect. When dry, coat the inside with asphaltum varnish.

For etching, use nitric acid, chemically pure, diluted with half water. Use warm water, especially in cold weather, otherwise the varnish is apt to shrink and spring from the surface of the plate. Frequently tip the bath during the etching, so that the liquid will wash over the surface of the plate, using a feather or soft brush to disperse the gas bubbles. The liquid should cover the surface of the plate to at least the depth of one quarter or half an inch. Take out the plate for examination when it has been under the acid a few minutes to note if any portion of the design has sprung, and if so, repair it. Etch to a depth equal to one third the thickness of the plate. When the etching is finally taken from the bath, wash it thoroughly by pouring water over the surface.

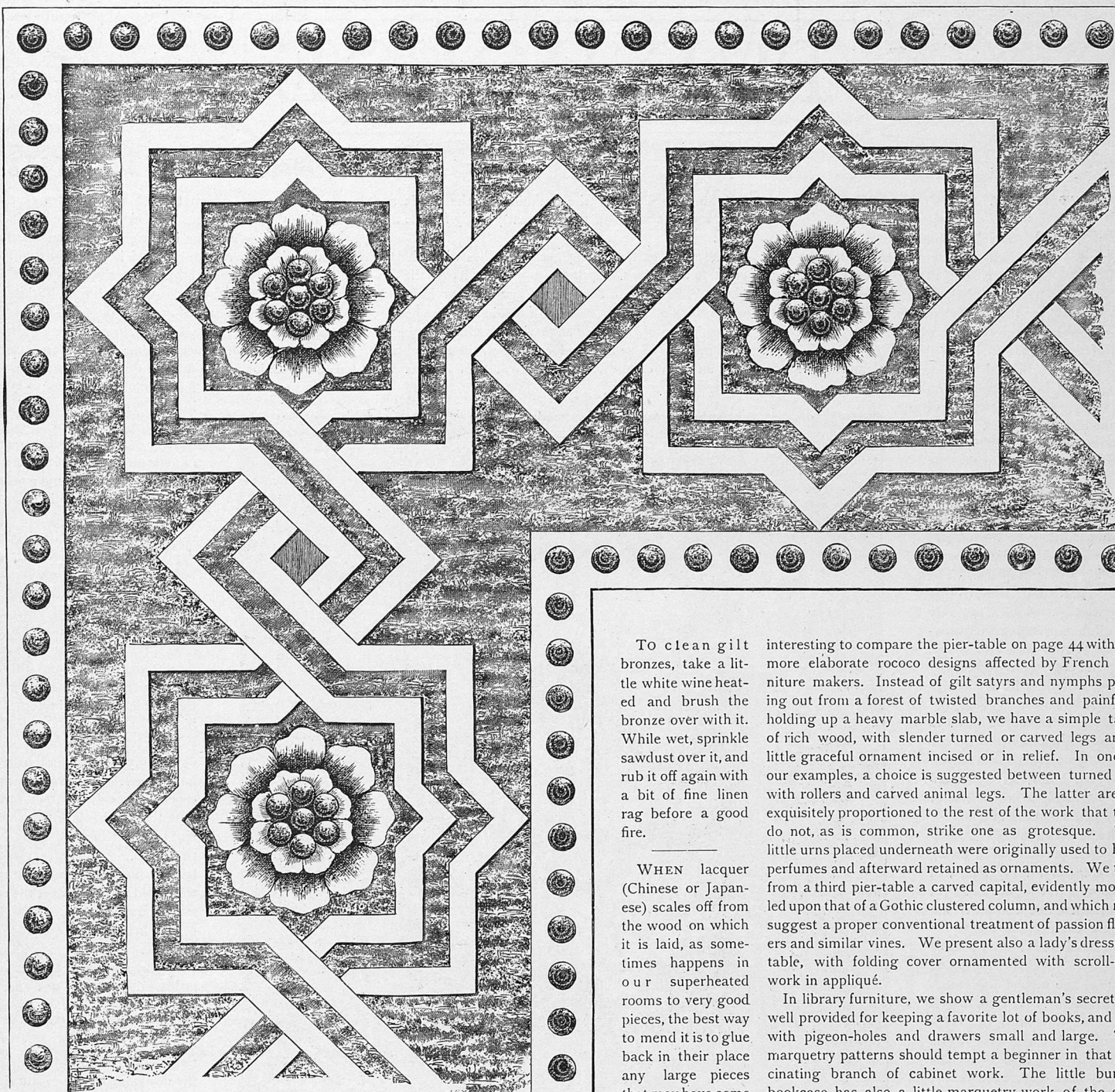
When facings are made of copper or brass they should, for artistic effect, be oxidized. Brush over the face a weak solution of nitric or sulphuric acid, then hold the plate over a good handful of burning newspapers, with face toward the flame. This will give the surface a rich and dark enamelling, which being gently rubbed with a cloth will produce a polish, showing in places a slight trace of the color of the metal. The effect of this treatment will be found superior to the garish brightness of polished metal.

In the example of interlaced bands, the rosettes are hammered into slight relief by fastening the metal to a pine board with washers and screws placed along the edge. The outlines of the petals are lowered with a tracer, going over two or three times, depressing the line to at least one sixteenth of an inch. Note that the tracer is sufficiently dull at the edge not to risk cutting through the metal. When the rosettes have been thus outlined, turn the metal face downward on the board, and give a further relief to the petals by indenting with



CARVED PANEL DESIGN (NATURAL TREATMENT). BY BENN PITMAN.

plaster or fire brick of the opening of the fireplace. Perfect security for this kind of metal facing is obtained by fastening immediately under the top of the fireplace a flat bar of iron, one inch wide and half an inch thick, bent to shape, to which the top metal facing is secured, the turned-under portion of the middle of the arch being wired to the iron bar. The side facings may be fastened, when necessary, with one-and-a-half wire nails, so far as possible, such parts of the design being used as will be least conspicuous.



PORTION OF ETCHED AND HAMMERED FIREPLACE FACING. BY BENN PITMAN.

a wooden punch made of oak or other hard wood flattened at the point to a smooth round of about one quarter of an inch in diameter. Use a hammer in preference to a mallet for this work.

Small beads or pellets make a very attractive line of metal decoration. An accurate line of them can be made by turning the plate face downward and marking the required line; then with the dividers mark off the distances. Next, with a dull-pointed steel punch, strike two or three light blows, making a distinct indentation. When the line is completed, let your assistant steady the plate, face upward, bead after bead, on the tip of a convex steel punch that is secured upright in a vice. The rounded point of this steel punch must be somewhat less than the size of the pellet. Now with a punch with a *concave* face of the required size, placed over the raised points, strike smart blows, turning the punch as you strike, so as to produce a polished and perfectly rounded head to the beads.

Metal facings are made more interesting and suggestive by the use of appropriate inscriptions. If any floral decoration is introduced, it should be hammered into slight relief. The lettering itself, after being etched, may also be thus treated for additional effect.

For more detailed explanation of decorative etching, the reader is referred to my article on the subject, in *The Art Amateur* last April.

BENN PITMAN.

mixed with copal varnish and applied thick in several layers, allowing each to dry before applying another. When this is at the height of the rest of the lacquer, it is polished, and then colored to accord with the rest.

OLD ENGLISH FURNITURE.

In furniture, as in other household and personal matters subject to the variations of fashion, the French have for centuries kept so much in advance of other peoples as in a manner to impose their styles upon them. Nevertheless, despite this advantage and the comparative indifference of English people to art in furniture, English makers were always somewhat refractory against French influence. They showed their national spirit especially in providing for strength and comfort and in giving expression in their designs to the national love of simple and sturdy forms. With them the French graces were imposed on a solid foundation, and, in consequence, their work shows, even in the height of the rococo movement, a characteristic mingling of strength and beauty, which to find in France one would have to go back to the fifteenth century. We believe, therefore, that we are rendering our readers, and furniture designers and makers especially, a service in reproducing some authentic English designs of Sheraton and other makers of his period. It will be

To clean gilt bronzes, take a little white wine heated and brush the bronze over with it. While wet, sprinkle sawdust over it, and rub it off again with a bit of fine linen rag before a good fire.

WHEN lacquer (Chinese or Japanese) scales off from the wood on which it is laid, as sometimes happens in our superheated rooms to very good pieces, the best way to mend it is to glue back in their place any large pieces that may have come off, and fill all holes that may be left with zinc white

interesting to compare the pier-table on page 44 with the more elaborate rococo designs affected by French furniture makers. Instead of gilt satyrs and nymphs peering out from a forest of twisted branches and painfully holding up a heavy marble slab, we have a simple table of rich wood, with slender turned or carved legs and a little graceful ornament incised or in relief. In one of our examples, a choice is suggested between turned feet with rollers and carved animal legs. The latter are so exquisitely proportioned to the rest of the work that they do not, as is common, strike one as grotesque. The little urns placed underneath were originally used to hold perfumes and afterward retained as ornaments. We take from a third pier-table a carved capital, evidently modelled upon that of a Gothic clustered column, and which may suggest a proper conventional treatment of passion flowers and similar vines. We present also a lady's dressing-table, with folding cover ornamented with scroll-saw work in appliqué.

In library furniture, we show a gentleman's secretary, well provided for keeping a favorite lot of books, and also with pigeon-holes and drawers small and large. The marquetry patterns should tempt a beginner in that fascinating branch of cabinet work. The little bureau bookcase has also a little marquetry work of the simplest kind on the edge of its tablet, making a pretty border to the baize or velvet. We would suggest some wood like cedar, the red heart-wood and yellow sapwood of which (properly dried) might be used in alternate sections. The carving necessary on the legs and the open shelves, though very effective, is also very easy. The lattice work on the sides of the shelves may be got out with the scroll-saw and finished by small tools. Similar remarks will apply to the small moving bookcase, which, however, may appropriately be mounted with brass trimmings.

The sofa-table suggests the reflection that though the present is supposed to be a very luxurious age, we must go back a century or so to find the means of writing luxuriously. Think of any living writer using sapphire powder to blot his copy, as Jean Jacques Rousseau did! And the very idea of having a table specially made to draw up to a sofa seems to us to show a very luxurious spirit. Yet, on consideration, it will be found a very useful article. The little extension leaves with brackets might, of course, be omitted, or the ends of the table might be made to take this shape.

The large library writing-table with drawers and well is as simple as it could possibly be. The ornamental panelling indicated on the left may be got out with the scroll-saw, but should be carefully bevelled afterward by hand. The mouldings for top and bottom, shown in section underneath, are such as are still commonly well made by carpenters who take any pride in their trade. The same may be said of the mouldings for the gentle-

man's bureau which appears on the page with it. The ornamental work on the latter, with its mingling of Gothic and Chinese motives, is perhaps more difficult to execute than its effect would warrant. It would all have to be got out of the solid wood, and yet it is, necessarily, because of its extreme lightness, a mere appliqué. We give it principally to show one of the small absurdities of a style which, however, unites much strength to a certain quaint elegance. The simpler styles of ornamentation shown on the other pieces illustrated can easily be applied to this, and the framework, as in all the pieces, is as solid and as well proportioned as need be.

SOME of the new satiny mica papers, which have a sheen fairly comparable with that of the best Lyons wall textiles, are sometimes used in combination with a felt surface in stripes, or in bold Greek or Gothic borders, with very good effect.

WHERE a strong yet sober effect in wall hangings is to be produced, there has been up to the present nothing to compete with stamped and illuminated leather. The old styles of stamped and bronzed papers have almost always a cheap look and tarnish quickly. Lincrusta and similar materials offer a surface too hard and unyielding for use in a private habitation. But stamped leathers are excessively dear, and the problem has remained an enticing one to inventors, to prepare a substitute which should have the pliability and the pleasant metallic shimmer of good illuminated leather without its cost. The problem seems to have been solved by a New York firm of manufacturers with a special quality of paper, that takes a particularly sharp impression in relief, and which, when overlaid with white metal in leaves, and that again toned with some warm-colored translucent varnish, has all the artistic qualities desired. It is also permanent does not tarnish as bronze does, and has nothing of that unpleasant gritty look that bronze powders always give. The varnishes employed are of reddish brown, dull crimson, indigo, old-gold color and the like; the patterns are large and bold Renaissance and rococo designs admirably contrived to show a glittering line or point of the metal here and there without creating a glare at any part of the wall surface.

SOME of the handsomest designs in wall coverings are shown in cheaper, yet elegant papers. A lotos pattern, with the large, lily-like flowers and rounded leaves in two tones of soft blue and one of yellowish olive, is remarkably successful. A width of it makes an excellent frieze for a plain, blue-gray wall paper, and with wood-work painted to correspond and hangings chosen to harmonize with the prevailing tint, would make one of those simple yet charming interiors which Mr. Whistler has been one of the first to introduce. Other patterns in the same style show large groups of roses and other flowers in a few tones of purple and ivory, ivory and pale salmon color, and many other combinations. Eighteenth-century arabesque designs of a very refined character are also produced in this kind of paper. Some rococo designs, with the scrolls in relief and touched with gold, and the panels filled with flowers in camaieu, in a contrasting tone, are also to be seen. They would be very appropriate for a drawing-room or parlor of medium size.

THE Yale Library memorial window recently finished by Mr. Louis C. Tiffany is an excellent specimen of what may properly be termed the American school of stained glass-work. In it the technical aim has been to reduce the amount of painted work to a minimum, dependence being placed on the glass itself not only for the fundamental color effect, but for almost all the tones necessary to give modelling and relief. Enamel paint, though when fired semi-transparent, is compared with the glass, opaque, and its colors have a dull, tarnished look beside the extremely brilliant hues of glass. Hence the desire on the part of American artists to get rid of it. Mr. Tiffany has all along been foremost in the efforts made in this direction. His Yale window may be said to be a complete success. Paint has been used only on the faces and hands of the eighteen life-size

figures composing it. The modelling of their draperies and of the landscape background has been obtained by the careful selection of the varied hues of the material, by plating—that is, superposing one piece of glass on another, and occasionally by moulding the glass while it was soft. The window is oblong; the figures representing Law, Religion, Music, Art and Literature are disposed in three large groups; the coloring is, in general,

planned to be lit by round arched windows grouped three on a side. The figured window replaces one of these groups, but uniformity will be restored in a sufficient degree by placing in front of it pillars of polished yellow marble supporting the three arches, the central one of which is oval, to accommodate the largest group of figures in the window—the others circular. The walls and ceiling will be decorated in an arabesque design in buff and gold.

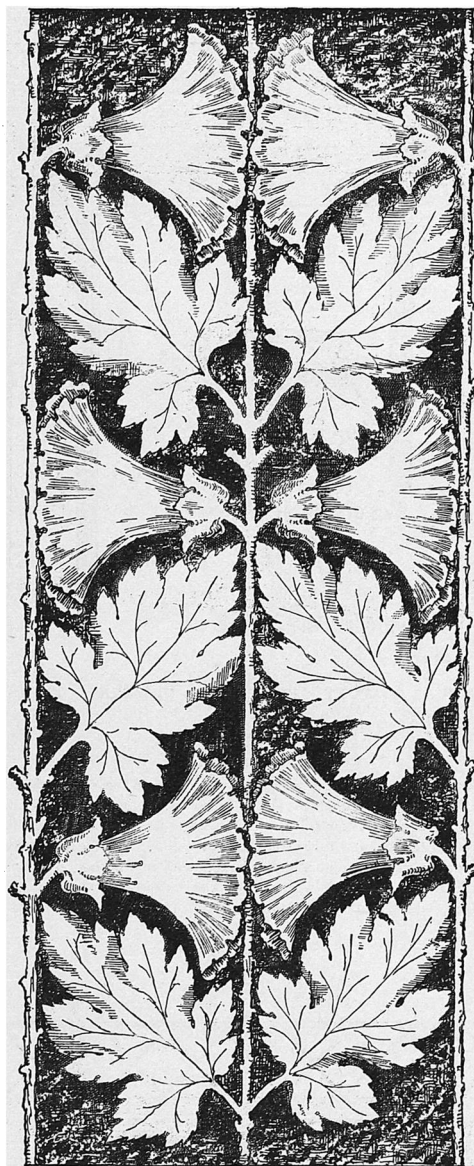
Treatment of Designs.

"LITTLE MISCHIEF" (COLOR PLATE NO. 1).

THE child's head given with the present number is by Mary Eley, an accomplished English painter of children, whose work is always admired and quickly bought at the exhibitions at the Royal Academy. The plate is an excellent study for students; for, in addition to great delicacy and truth of coloring, the portrait is instinct with life, deriving its charm as much from vivacity of expression as from actual beauty.

FOR PAINTING IN OILS a canvas of medium fine texture, half primed, will be found most suitable. If not sure of copying accurately free hand, take a careful tracing in outline and transfer it to the canvas by means of transfer paper. Set your palette with raw umber, raw Sienna, yellow ochre, pale lemon yellow, ivory black, white, scarlet vermilion, rose madder, Venetian red and cobalt. Begin by laying in the broad shadows on the face with raw umber, just a touch of Venetian red, ivory black and white mixed. Let the raw umber preponderate, and do not add enough white to make the color opaque. Shadows should always be more or less transparent; for this reason paint the shadows much more thinly than the lighter parts. Block them in distinctly, watching their forms, but carrying them a little beyond their limits when finished, so that the half tones may be properly worked into them. The half tones are cooler than the shadows. A mixture of cobalt, ivory black, yellow ochre and white will serve. If too green, add a touch of Venetian red. For a delicate face, Venetian red is preferable to Indian red, though the latter could be used. The color known as ultramarine—ask especially for Winsor & Newton's make—is better than cobalt for face painting, but much more expensive. The local flesh color is composed of scarlet, vermilion and white. The same color, stronger, is to be used for the flush on the cheeks, with some rose madder worked into it. A little pale lemon yellow must be used in parts for the distinctly yellow touches. For the lips take rose madder, white and raw umber; if too bright, modify with ivory black. The sharp touches in the nostrils can be put in with the original shadow color. For the eyebrows and markings of the eyes and eyelashes take raw umber and black. The blue coloring of the eyes can be obtained with cobalt, black and white. Lay the hair in broadly to begin with, in masses of light and shade, afterward working up the detail as far as possible at the same sitting, so that only a little touching up for the final finish may be necessary. The same method may be followed for every part of the picture. Shade the white drapery with raw umber, cobalt and white mixed, adding a little Venetian red in the shadow cast from the face. Load the white on with unsparing hand for the high lights, having first thoroughly incorporated with it a touch of yellow ochre to take off the crudeness. The background is composed of the same colors as those used for the dress, with a little more blue added in parts. When all the painting is brought up to the same degree of finish, allow it to dry, and before painting into it again wipe the canvas with a clean sponge rinsed in cold water; then dry it with a soft cloth and oil it over with a little pale drying oil or Roberson's medium. The object of this is to ensure the colors now laid on amalgamating properly with those beneath. Finish up carefully with the colors already indicated, modelling, strengthening, softening and correcting until you find nothing more to do. Very little vehicle of any kind should be used, especially in the beginning; it is apt to give a sticky look to the work and deprive it of texture.

FOR WATER-COLORS, use the same palette as that indicated for oils. It must be understood, however, that such a palette is by no means arbitrary, but is given as an aid to those who



CONVENTIONAL DESIGN FOR ETCHING AND HAMMERING. BY BENN PITMAN.

light and warm, but blue, green, rose, purple and dark brown are introduced in sufficient quantities to give variety. By a very sensible arrangement the entire scheme of interior decoration has been left in Mr. Tiffany's hands, thus avoiding the tasteless jumble of styles and motives almost certain to follow when various parts of the same interior are given to different artists. The room is square, with a domed ceiling, and was originally



ETCHED AND HAMMERED METAL FACING FOR A MANTELPIECE. DESIGNED BY BENN PITMAN.

(THE DESIGN IS GIVEN IN THE SUPPLEMENT, FULL WORKING SIZE.)